177 Great Brunswick Street.

Dublin May 19 1869

My dear Mr May — It seems ever so long since I heard from you — of you I heard a day or two ago from Edmund Quincy who tells me you have collected nearly 1000 dollars for George Thompson — which will be very good news for him & his family. But until he goes to "a better place" I don't expect to hear of his being quite out of pecuniary difficulty. The best thing that could happen him here below would be to get some pension or a place in which he would have nothing to do for his salary. He is past his labours — but I fear too much of a man of genius to avoid the unarithmeticed ways that bring people into difficulty.

Such a damp winter & spring as we have had & to these I attribute much of the discomfort I have felt since my return. I don't feel any better than when we parted & am good for little but sitting in the easiest of easy chairs & there reading or writing & talking — though for the exercise of ~~the~~ this latter faculty I have small occasion, as my social circle is neither large or loquacious.

I don't think this country ever looked more beautiful — the fields are like emeralds — the trees covered with their brightest & most tender hues — the lilac, the laburnum, & the hawthorn are clothed with pink, yellow & white flowers of great beauty & the gardens & greenhouses are charming. Well for those who live actually in the country — we are only suburban. When the east wind & the rain are actually gone we shall have delicious weather. Two days ago was Whitmonday

Cairnes is wonderful for his correct political perceptions of such a remote & puzzling country as Ireland.

Trollope's books are too shabby. I won't send them. I send also a capital book of Fairy stories. Daniel O'Rourke is a king of stories.

A stray note enclosed as a very curious specimen of amateur punctuation

– a holiday for clerks & labouring people & the outpour of excursionists from the city who wandered towards the lovely country south of Dublin. I was spending some days with an old friend of mine who lives in one of the most paradisaical spots in Ireland – in the County of Wicklow about 16 miles south of Dublin. It is situated in the Dargle of which you may have heard & not unlikely seen & is just opposite the great Sugar Loaf a conical hill about 1600 feet high & one of the most picturesque elevations in Ireland. My host has been twice married & is the father of 15 children of whom 13 are living. He is 74 – the mother died yesterday in her 96th year. & his eldest son takes this letter ~~on~~ to New York on its way to Leicester. This son is remarkable as the first & only member of the Society of Friends who has ~~to~~ sought & accepted a title. He is Sir John Barrington, & was a few years ago Lord Mayor of Dublin, & gave a ball to the Prince of Wales at which numbers of Quaker girls danced with the rest! What must the shades of Geo. Fox & Wm Penn have thought as they stood by in their cloaks of darkness. Sir John is a really nice fellow, full of fun, good humour & vivacity, not much of a reader or a deep thinker – but thoroughly pleasant & unaffected. He called to see me at his father's that I might give him some hints for his behaviour among the Americans. He professes to be a staunch Quaker, & a Tory politician. Of this at least I feel pretty sure – that he will not lose his temper, which his mother used to say was heavenly. I wish you could see him for the fun of the thing – for your own amusement rather than your edification. I gave him several letters of introduction – but not to you for you will hardly see him in his flight.

Incidentally. — I remember Ada's saying with her customary candour that much of what she knew she had gathered from novels. Being her well wisher, I would like her to extend her sphere of knowledge & so send her two books out of my store which have been greatly soiled on the outside by frequent lending — for I don't keep books merely as ornaments — so she can cover them with paper — read them — & then lend them to others* or put them in the library. I mean the town library — not yours — I know how you abhor soiled books.

By the way I find I have one Liberty Bell less than you. I have none for 1853. You told me you had one for 1840. I have not that but have one for 1839 — as well as the Envoy. Can you read me this riddle.

I saw the name of Mrs H. S. Chapman, 3 children, & servant in the list of passengers by the Persia some days ago — & so wrote to Mr Laugel & Mr Dicey's care to ask about her sister Caroline. An answer came from Mrs Laugel. It was not her mother — but her brother Henry's wife that came on her way to Vienna with her father, the new American ambassador. I will be much obliged to you for any news of Caroline's condition. She has been one of my kindest friends.

My opinion is that there will be no war on the head of the Alabama. A real war would be one of the greatest calamities that could befal either America or England — & as far as these islands go would chiefly tell upon the poorer classes who are already poor enough in all conscience & were certainly the most innocent part of the community as far you were concerned.

* not forgetting Miss Partridge — if she likes such folly.

The ignorance of America among all I meet is something amazing. And indeed I suspect the ignorance & indifference in every country of every other country. What wonder we know so little of the world to come?

A young Irishman who lately induced a young English lady to ~~so~~ agree to marry him called on me today to talk on his woes. He wishes to live plainly, but respectably, & to keep independent by keeping out of debt. Her friends expect him to spend 1500 dollars out of his whole capital ~~by keeping~~ in furnishing his house so as to exceed his parents & outshine his neighbours in his new home & to get a house beyond his means. The young lady evidently is of the same mind as her friends — he dreads the future. What would you advise him to do? I would tell him to do justly & fear not.

It is a great time since I heard from any of you. At least it feels a very long time to me who thirst for American manuscript news — for I get lots of papers from E. Q. and others.

With my kindest regards to you all I remain
Your affectionately & for ever obliged
R. D. Webb

I have picked the books out of the bookcase & have no time to get them bound. I will direct them to care of W. P. Garrison 3 Park Place to be forwarded to you by express for which he will pay.

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MS. B.1.6 v.15, p.131